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Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields

Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit

Letter dated 5 August 2005 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Lebanon to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

In my capacity as Chairman of the Arab Group for the month of August 2005, I have the honour to transmit to you resolution No. 314 and the Declaration issued by the Joint Ministerial Conference of Arab Ministers of Social Affairs and Planning on the Millennium Development Goals which met on 30 June 2005 in Cairo.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter and its annex issued as a document of the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session under agenda items 45 and 55.

(*Signed*) Ibrahim **Assaf**
Chargé d'affaires a.i.
Permanent Mission of Lebanon to the United Nations
Chairman of the Arab Group

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Annex to the letter dated 5 August 2005 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Lebanon to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

Conference of Arab Ministers of Social Affairs and Planning on the Millennium Development Goals

1. Resolution of the Arab Ministers of Social Affairs and Planning
2. Arab Declaration on the pursuit of the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals

Cairo, 30 June 2005

Resolution on preparations for the high-level summit on the Millennium Development Goals

The Conference of Arab Ministers of Social Affairs and Planning,

Having considered:

The memorandum of the Technical Secretariat of the Council of Arab Ministers of Social Affairs,

Resolution No. 473 of the Council of Arab Ministers of Social Affairs,

The Millennium Declaration issued in 2000 by the General Assembly of the United Nations,

The Brasilia Declaration issued by the South American and Arab Countries Summit, and

The conclusions and recommendations of the Arab workshop on the Millennium Development Goals,

Decides:

I. To adopt the Arab Declaration on the pursuit of the Millennium Development Goals as submitted and to confirm the effective participation of the Member States in the work of the High-Level Summit to be convened in New York in September 2005;

II. To support the delegation of the General Secretariat of the League of Arab States in coordinating between the delegations of the Arab delegations participating in the work of the Conference;

III. To express appreciation of the efforts made by the General Secretariat of the League of Arab States and the Regional Bureau for the Arab States in the United Nations Development Programme, Arab parliamentarians, representatives of civil society and Arab experts who participated in the preparation and drafting of the Declaration;

IV. To request the Technical Secretariat to circulate the Declaration to the Member States to be used by them in preparing their regional reports;

V. To instruct the Technical Secretariat to prepare a comprehensive report on the work and outcome of the Summit for submission to the Council at its twenty-fifth regular session;

VI. To request regional and international organizations to make use of the official statistical reports issued by national statistical offices in the Arab States in the reports issued by them, and to compare such reports with those of the national statistical offices in order to reconcile them before use and to endeavour to correct any reports issued by them that do not reflect the situation of the Arab States.

Arab Declaration on the pursuit of the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals

Cairo, 30 June 2005

Preamble:

We, the Arab Ministers of Social Affairs and Ministers of Planning, meeting at the headquarters of the General Secretariat of the League of Arab States, in the Ministerial Conference on the pursuit of the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals,

On the basis of our belief that mankind is the agent and objective of development and that progress and advancement are conditional upon human welfare and dignity,

Inspired by the Arab, Islamic and human heritage in promoting the dignity of mankind, and safeguarding human rights and defending human progress, achievements and security,

Being aware that the attainment of development in Arab society is an urgent imperative and that the process of modernizing the social structure must be completed without delay,

Conscious of the magnitude of the challenges facing the Arab nation which threaten its stability and cohesion, and mindful of the close ties between Arab countries and of the importance of Arab solidarity and integration and their role in the achievement of development,

Being convinced of the necessity of reviewing and promoting development policies and of directing the course of those policies in the service of mankind, and affirming that Arab development has its basis in the Charter of the League of Arab States and the resolutions of the Arab summit and its specialized ministerial councils and on the charters of joint action and the related strategies, in particular the social action strategy in the Arab States, the strategy for poverty eradication and the charter of social action,

Affirming that a just and comprehensive peace is an essential foundation for the achievement of development and progress and that the establishment of peace requires the complete withdrawal of the occupation of all occupied Arab territories and the establishment of the independent Palestinian State with Jerusalem as its capital in accordance with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and General Assembly resolution 194 (III),

Being committed to international instruments, in particular the Charter of the United Nations, human rights charters, the United Nations Declaration on the Right to Development and the Millennium Declaration of the United Nations,

On the strength of the existing joint cooperation between the Arab Group and other regional groups, including the African Group, the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States and the Group of 77 and China, and in accordance with the content of the Brasilia Declaration and the Doha Declaration to achieve development and realize its objectives,

Affirming the Arab position of commitment to the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, and effective Arab participation in the efforts

being made to prepare for the High-Level Summit that is to be organized by the United Nations in September 2005,

We recognize that the Arab States have it in their power to give effect to the Millennium Declaration, to face up to the challenges of achieving the targets of the Millennium Development Goals by 2015 and that the pursuit of the implementation of that process will require the incorporation of the Millennium Development Goals in overall national strategies, plans, targets and policies, and the formulation of a comprehensive development policy that addresses the social aspect through the following:

I. Reducing poverty and the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger:

(a) Poverty eradication in the Arab States within a specific time frame through a multifaceted and integrated approach embracing economic, social and health policies and within a macroeconomic framework, improving the situation of poor families, efforts to implement the Arab strategy for poverty eradication with emphasis on the need for every national strategy to be ready to understand the nature and causes of poverty in each individual State, and the interpenetration of general measures and the multiple aspects of poverty, and the necessity of participation by poor population groups in the challenges and priorities of the programmes aimed at combating poverty.

(b) Devising policies in support of the process of economic development focusing on increasing the rates of investment and preserving an acceptable degree of economic stability and social justice.

(c) Pursuing financial policies that ensure sustainability and avoid discontinuities that are in practice prejudicial to the Millennium Development Goals.

(d) Removing the obstacles that have an adverse impact on development goals, whether legislative, social, institutional or operational, and the effective administration and utilization of internal and external resources and the coordination of activities among all the governmental agencies involved in poverty reduction and the activation of institutional partnership between various strata of society and social forces, while preserving the harmonious functioning of the various partners.

II. Emphasis on the right to and the quality of primary education:

(a) Ensuring equality of opportunity and non-discrimination, making primary education compulsory and available free to all children, enabling them to obtain a good quality education, making the provision of secondary education universal and available to all, taking into account measures to ensure equal opportunities to acquire education, thereby contributing to the attainment of equality of opportunity.

(b) Development of school administration and empowering it to supervise the processes of school enrolment, and efforts to monitor the enrolment of marginalized groups, particularly in education, and adopting the requirements of local communities to the characteristics of the pupils of those areas.

(c) Curriculum development and eliminating all discrimination from educational content.

(d) Affirming that the goals of universal education require the broadening of participation in decision-making and efforts in favour of the adoption of the principle of decentralization, leading to an increase in the interest taken by families and by the local community in the education of their children with a view to improving the quality of the education service.

(e) The promotion of cooperation in the field of education and activation of the work of the relevant Arab regional and subregional organizations and centres, and of the Arab programmes, in order to devise common programmes and legislation, and to make data available and exchange experiences.

(f) Adopting the necessary measures to raise the social status of teachers at all levels of education, to review the objectives of teacher training programmes and to afford teachers the opportunity to participate in the process of formulating educational policies.

III. A commitment to the necessity of eradicating discrimination against women:

(a) Launching of initiatives, strategies and work plans designed to achieve equality and justice and promote awareness of Arab, Islamic and human principles and values which guarantee women's rights and their role in society; enactment of the necessary legislation to protect and make provision for women and to enhance their economic potential, to reject various forms of discrimination against women and ensure their participation in decision-making on a basis of equality with men, and to ensure the full participation of women in all kinds of social, political and economic activities.

(b) Providing various forms of support to enable women to carry out their role in the family concurrently with their role as citizens, and introducing laws to permit flexible working arrangements.

(c) Establishing national media policies to promote awareness of the different roles of women, and efforts to implement information programmes projecting a positive image of women, doing away with negative images of exploitation and making clear the importance of the benefits of women's participation in public life, both for their families and for social development as a whole.

(d) Efforts to ensure that women are represented in decision-making centres and advisory councils and propagating the culture of participation through school curricula and school activities.

IV. Emphasis on primary health care:

(a) Regarding all forms of primary health care as a right the services of which are to be enjoyed by all members of society without distinction and making it clear that the eradication of poverty depends on the elimination of its causes, and that the chief benefit is the enjoyment by members of society of a healthy life free from illness and disease.

(b) Devising health programmes that complement development programmes which reflect directly on the health situation, such as teaching, the infrastructure, the combating of poverty and addressing the defects of society, thereby bringing about a reduction in child and mother mortality rates; the State should use all its institutions,

with the participation of the private sector and the institutions of civil society, to develop health services.

(c) Support for preventive initiatives and increased focus on dealing with epidemic gastric diseases including malaria, tuberculosis and AIDS in view of the increasing gravity of the AIDS pandemic, and the inclusion of policies to combat it in educational and media programmes and awareness programmes, and the promotion of participation by all sectors of society in dealing with them, as well as enabling poor people to obtain basic medicines.

V. Taking the necessary measures to ensure that people with disabilities enjoy to the full all rights on an equal basis with other groups in the community in both the public and private fields, including the possibility of obtaining a good education, comprehensive health care and protection of people with disabilities against violence, ill treatment and neglect; the necessary legislation should be drafted to prohibit discrimination against them, to ensure their dignity and to implement and to make effective the Arab Decade for People with Disabilities, taking account of the particularly difficult situation of poor people with disabilities.

VI. Promotion of and support for programmes and policies designed to ensure environmental sustainability and protection:

(a) Limiting environmental pollution and desertification and rationalization of the management of water resources and energy.

(b) Increasing the provision of safe drinking water and development of healthy sewage systems in various regions of the Arab countries.

(c) Limiting the spread of unregulated housing and shanty dwellings in order to promote human dignity in living conditions and accommodation.

(d) Opposing the environmental pollution caused by the Israeli authorities by dumping waste in the Palestinian territories thus seriously endangering environmental health as well as tyrannical actions such as the uprooting of trees and the confiscation of private land with water reserves.

VII. Activating worldwide participation on behalf of cooperation and support:

(a) Participation in the worldwide efforts to eradicate poverty and the necessity of enhancing resources and distributing them fairly and effectively in order to ensure the attainment of all the internationally agreed development goals and to eradicate poverty, to ensure that the developed countries fulfil their undertaking to contribute 0.05 per cent of GDP to the least developed countries by 2009, reducing the disparity in levels of economic and social development between the rich and poor countries as well as promoting the receipt by the developing countries, and particularly the least developed countries, of the technical assistance and training necessary to attain the Millennium Development Goals.

(b) Efforts to bridge the digital divide, as a phenomenon with social dimensions, and to establish worldwide partnership in the field of technology based on a shared view of solidarity and development with a view to achieving the Millennium Development Goals and uniting Arab efforts to attain that objective at the second phase of the World Summit on the Information Society which will meet in Tunisia from 16 to 18 November 2005.

(c) Activating the values of worldwide solidarity to combat poverty and promote opportunities for development through the support and financing of the World Solidarity Fund and the importance of activating that instrument and allocating the necessary resources for it as a contribution to the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals.

(d) Continuing to work with international partners to eradicate the indebtedness of the low-income Arab countries and to invest the debt service and principal payments to pay for the process of social development, the attainment of sustainable development and a quantitative and qualitative increase in official development aid.

(e) Establishing the necessary plans and programmes to implement the principles set forth in the Brasilia Declaration, adopted at the South American and Arab Countries Summit, in particular its provisions connected with addressing hunger and poverty and providing the necessary financing to implement the Millennium Development Goals and to identify new sources of funding and also identifying appropriate mechanisms to give effect to the initiatives set forth in the Doha Declaration, adopted at the Second South Summit, in particular its provisions concerning the establishment of a fund to finance assistance for the poor countries to enable them to implement the Millennium Development Goals.